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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN: ACTION FOR EQUALITY, DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE

Report of the Secretary-General

SUMMARY

The present report has been prepared in response to General Assembly resolution 49/161 of 23 December 1994. It provides an overview of the provisions and recommendations for action contained in the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by consensus by the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. The report focuses, in particular, on those recommendations which have immediate implications for action at the international level, including those requiring consideration by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

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CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 10	3
II.	FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN	11 - 92	4
	A. Response of the international community and the United Nations system	11 - 30	4
	B. Specific provisions of the Platform for Action relating to follow-up	31 - 92	9
	1. National level	31 - 33	9
	2. Regional/subregional level	34 - 36	9
	3. International level	37 - 92	10
	(a) General Assembly	39 - 40	10
	(b) Economic and Social Council	41 - 44	11
	(c) Commission on the Status of Women	45 - 47	11
	(d) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women	48 - 49	12
	(e) Role of the Secretary-General	50 - 61	12
	(f) United Nations Secretariat	62 - 75	15
	(g) United Nations Development Fund for Women	76 - 78	19
	(h) International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women	79 - 80	19
	(i) Other organizations of the United Nations system	81 - 89	20
	(j) Non-governmental organizations	90 - 92	22
III.	RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FIFTIETH SESSION	93	23

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 49/161 of 23 December 1994, requested the Secretary-General to prepare for consideration by the Assembly at its fiftieth session a report on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing from 4 to 15 September 1995. The present report is being submitted to the General Assembly in accordance with that request. The report of the Fourth World Conference on Women is currently before the Assembly. 1/

2. The General Assembly's decision, in its resolution 45/129 of 14 December 1990, to convene a Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995 was adopted against the background of a strong concern, reflected in Economic and Social Council resolutions 1990/12, 1990/14 and 1990/15, at the pace of implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, 2/ in particular with regard to the objectives of ensuring equality for women, promoting their integration in development and advancing their participation in efforts to promote peace. The themes of the United Nations Decade for Women - equality, development and peace - were also chosen as the themes of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

3. In its resolution 47/95 of 16 December 1992, the General Assembly accepted with appreciation the offer of the Government of China to host the Conference.

4. The Conference was attended by 17,000 representatives of Governments, non-governmental organizations, international organizations and the media. Over 30,000 participants attended a parallel forum organized by non-governmental organizations at Huairou.

5. The Commission on the Status of Women served as the preparatory committee for the Conference and the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the Secretariat served as the secretariat of the Conference; Mrs. Gertrude Mongella was appointed as its Secretary-General.

6. The preparatory activities for the Conference were characterized by intense collaboration among Governments, the Secretariat and the organizations of the United Nations system, and by the unprecedented involvement and strong support of other intergovernmental organizations and an extremely broad spectrum of non-governmental actors at the international, regional, subregional and national levels.

7. Activities at the national level were wide-ranging and included the preparation of national reports on the review and appraisal of the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. Such reports were submitted by 165 Member and Observer States. Several countries also convened national meetings and/or set up national preparatory committees.

8. Each of the five regional commissions of the United Nations convened a regional preparatory meeting. These meetings, which were held at Jakarta, Vienna, Mar del Plata, Argentina, Dakar and Amman, resulted in regional plans or programmes of action that provided regional perspectives for the Platform for

Action. Consultations organized with representatives of youth organizations at each regional meeting resulted in youth statements on the Platform for Action and further mobilization of youth activities at national and regional level.

9. Support for the Conference at the international level was furthered by the establishment by the Secretary-General of an Advisory Group composed of 19 eminent persons. The Group met three times prior to the Conference. It provided valuable advice to the Secretary-General and assisted in mobilizing political interest and public attention for the Conference.

10. A Trust Fund, to which a number of Member States and other donors contributed generously, augmented the resources available from the regular budget for the preparatory work.

II. FOLLOW-UP TO THE FOURTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN

A. Response of the international community and the United Nations system

11. The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action 3/ were adopted by consensus on 15 September 1995 by 189 Governments. The Declaration embodies the commitment of the international community to advance the goals of equality, development and peace and to implement the Platform for Action, ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all policies and programmes. The Platform for Action sets out measures for national and international action for the advancement of women.

12. The Fourth World Conference on Women was a conference of commitment. During the Conference, Governments, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental bodies made specific commitments to implement the goals and objectives of the Conference. Those commitments must be sustained and translated into concrete policies and actions.

13. The Conference brought together the cross-cutting issues of development, equality and peace, and analysed them from a gender perspective. It defined an agenda for action to empower women in the social, political and economic spheres, in both private and public life, and to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. It emphasized the connection between advancement of women and progress for society as a whole. It reaffirmed clearly that societal issues must be addressed from a gender perspective in order to ensure sustainable development. This agenda, and the approaches it embodies, must guide follow-up action at all levels.

14. As agreed in Beijing, the set of actions set out in the Platform for Action "should lead to fundamental change". To that end "immediate action and accountability are essential if the targets are to be met by the year 2000. Implementation is primarily the responsibility of Governments, but is also dependent on a wide range of institutions in the public, private and non-governmental sectors at the community, national, subregional/regional and international levels" (para. 286).

15. The overriding message of the Fourth World Conference on Women was that the issues addressed in the Platform for Action are global and universal. Deeply entrenched attitudes and practices perpetuate inequality and discrimination against women, in public and private life, in all parts of the world. Accordingly, implementation will require changes in values, attitudes, practices and priorities at the national, regional and international levels. A clear commitment to international norms and standards of equality between men and women, and measures to protect and promote the human rights of women and girl children as an integral part of universal human rights must underlie all action. Institutions at all levels must be reoriented to expedite implementation. An active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective should be promoted by Governments, the United Nations system and all other relevant organizations.

16. National-level action and supporting action at the international and regional levels should be focused on the 12 critical areas of concern addressed by the Platform for Action (see chap. IV):

(a) The persistent and increasing burden of poverty on women;

(b) Inequalities and inadequacies in, and unequal access to, education and training;

(c) Inequalities and inadequacies in and unequal access to health care and related services;

(d) Violence against women;

(e) The effects of armed or other kinds of conflict on women, including those living under foreign occupation;

(f) Inequality in economic structures and policies, in all forms of productive activities and in access to resources;

(g) Inequality between men and women in the sharing of power and decision-making at all levels;

(h) Insufficient mechanisms at all levels to promote the advancement of women;

(i) Lack of respect for, and inadequate promotion and protection of, the human rights of women;

(j) Stereotyping of women and inequality in women's access to and participation in all communication systems, especially in the media;

(k) Gender inequalities in the management of natural resources and in the safeguarding of the environment;

(l) Persistent discrimination against and violation of the rights of the girl child.

17. Effective action will require the broadest possible cooperation. As indicated in paragraph 306:

> "The Platform for Action needs to be implemented through the work of all bodies and organizations of the United Nations system during the period 1995-2000, specifically and as an integral part of wider programming. An enhanced framework for international cooperation for gender issues must be developed ... in order to ensure the integrated and comprehensive implementation, follow-up and assessment of the Platform for Action, taking into account the results of global United Nations summits and conferences. The fact that at all of these summits and conferences, Governments have committed themselves to the empowerment of women in different areas, makes coordination crucial to the follow-up strategies for this Platform for Action. The Agenda for Development and the Agenda for Peace should take into account the Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women."

18. The Platform for Action further states (para. 307) that "the institutional capacity of the United Nations system to carry out and coordinate its responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action, as well as its expertise and working methods to promote the advancement of women, should be improved" and that "responsibility for ensuring the implementation of the Platform for Action and the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes of the United Nations system must rest at the highest levels" (para. 308).

19. The Secretary-General is in agreement with the Conference's conclusion that "to improve the system's efficiency and effectiveness in providing support for equality and women's empowerment at the national level and to enhance its capacity to achieve the objectives of the Platform for Action, there is a need to renew, reform and revitalize various parts of the United Nations system" (para 309). At the level of the United Nations and its agencies, the strengthening of the capacity of the system to support an integrated, effective follow-up to the Fourth World Conference as part of the overall effort to ensure the coordinated implementation of the results of the series of recent global conferences should be a key objective in pursuing further the ongoing reform process.

20. There must be a new unity of purpose and action in the Organization and the system as a whole contributing to the provision of effective, coordinated support for national action; coherent support for policy-making by the concerned intergovernmental bodies to further the key role of the Organization in respect of standard-setting, policy coordination and advocacy; mutual feedback and reinforcement between national and international action; and effective mainstreaming that ensures that the gender dimension is fully integrated in all aspects of the work of the United Nations.

21. In accordance with chapters V and VI of the Platform for Action, effective implementation of the Conference recommendations will require that existing machinery and institutions sharpen their focus, set clear priorities for action, evaluation and coordination, establish accountability mechanisms and use available resources efficiently.

22. Against this background, the Secretary-General intends to pursue vigorously his efforts to create a stronger, better coordinated programme for the advancement of women. In this regard a key new role will be played by his Senior Adviser (see paras. 54-57 below) and, at the system-wide level, by the proposed Administrative Committee on Coordination task force (see paras. 53 and 89 below).

23. Within the United Nations itself, the requirements from the Platform for Action have given added force to the provisions of General Assembly resolution 48/111 of 20 December 1993, in which it urged that interaction between the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Division for the Advancement of Women, the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women be reviewed and rationalized within the context of ongoing efforts to revitalize the Economic and Social Council in pursuance of a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women.

24. Accordingly, the Secretary-General will review the different United Nations mechanisms for the advancement of women with a view to making them more mutually supportive and effective, eliminating any duplication and ensuring that the essential linkages are strengthened between the standard-setting and normative work of the Organization and operational activities. A key element of this review and, more generally, a central objective of the overall reform process, should be the enhancement of the capacity of the Organization in support of global policy-making and mainstreaming, mobilizing in a coordinated way the contributions of all parts of the Organization and the system. The Secretary-General will be guided, inter alia, by the Platform of Action, which envisages "reviewing and strengthening the strategies and working methods of different United Nations mechanisms for the advancement of women with a view to rationalizing and, as appropriate, strengthening their advisory, catalytic and monitoring functions in relation to mainstream bodies and agencies. Women/gender units are important for effective mainstreaming, but strategies must be further developed to prevent inadvertent marginalization as opposed to mainstreaming of the gender dimension throughout all operations" (para. 309).

25. The capacity of UNIFEM to provide effective operational support for follow-up action at the national level and to exercise a catalytic role in promoting an effective inter-agency coordination at the country level, through the resident coordinator system, and in bringing country-level experience to bear on relevant aspects of the work of the system at the global level will need to be fully utilized.

26. Proposals for strengthening the research and training capacity of the Organization in pursuance of a stronger, more unified programme for the advancement of women, as outlined in successive reports of the Secretary-General (E/1993/82, A/48/591 and A/49/365-E/1994/119), are already before the General Assembly. They require further consideration pursuant to the relevant Economic and Social Council and General Assembly resolutions on the merger of INSTRAW and UNIFEM. The objectives embodied in those resolutions should be actively pursued as an integral part of the effort to enhance the capacity of the Organization to promote a coherent and sustained follow-up to the Conference.

27. Enhancing coordination and improving the substantive services provided to the Commission on the Status of Women, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and other relevant bodies is another critical objective. The Division for the Advancement of Women has a key responsibility in this regard in support of global policy-making and mainstreaming.

28. The decisions to be taken by the General Assembly at its current session, including on the role and support requirements of the Commission on the Status of Women and other relevant bodies, and subsequent deliberations in those bodies should further the process of renewal, reform and revitalization referred to in paragraph 309 of the Platform for Action. In that light, the Secretary-General, in consultation with the chairpersons of these bodies and drawing on the advice of the proposed high-level board referred to in paragraph 61 below, will submit a further report to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session on ways to enhance the capacity of the Organization to support the ongoing follow-up to the Conference in the most integrated and effective way.

29. The mobilization of adequate resources is another key requirement for the effective implementation of the Platform for Action. The Conference made a strong call for such global mobilization. As stated in paragraph 345:

> "To implement the Platform for Action, funding will need to be identified and mobilized from all sources and across all sectors. The reformulation of policies and reallocation of resources may be needed within and among programmes, but some policy changes may not necessarily have financial implications. Mobilization of additional resources both public and private, including resources from innovative sources of funding, may also be necessary."

In paragraph 361 there is a call for effective and efficient use of funds by the United Nations system in its efforts to promote the advancement of women and to enhance its capacity to further the objectives of the Platform for Action. The Platform underlines the need "to renew, reform and revitalize various parts of the United Nations system" and to allocate "additional resources from within the United Nations regular budget in order to implement the Platform for Action". It further states (para. 310):

> "In following up the Fourth World Conference on Women, all entities of the United Nations system focusing on the advancement of women should have the necessary resources and support to carry out follow-up activities. The efforts of gender focal points within organizations should be well integrated into overall policy, planning, programming and budgeting."

30. The following paragraphs recall specific provisions of the Platform for Action concerning follow-up, focusing on the recommendations in its chapters V and VI, and immediate actions required to initiate their implementation. Follow-up by the United Nations system as a whole will be covered in greater detail in future reports to the General Assembly and other concerned intergovernmental bodies, including through the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001. 4/

B. Specific provisions of the Platform for Action relating to follow-up

1. National level

31. Governments, according to paragraph 293 of the Platform for Action, "have the primary responsibility for implementing the Platform for Action". Governments are called upon "to take a leading role in coordinating, monitoring and assessing progress in the advancement of women". Governments, with financial and advisory assistance from regional and international organizations (para. 300), are called upon (para. 296) "to establish or improve the effectiveness of national machineries for the advancement of women at the highest political level, appropriate intra- and inter-ministerial procedures and staffing, and other institutions with the mandate and capacity to broaden women's participation and integrate gender analysis into policies and programmes".

32. In paragraph 297 Governments are called upon to begin as soon as possible to develop implementation strategies for the Platform for Action, preferably by the end of 1995, with a view to completion by the end of 1996. National planning should be broad-based and participatory, comprehensive and time-bound, and should include proposals for allocating or reallocating resources for implementation.

33. The United Nations resident coordinators at the country level will have a key role in assisting Governments in these efforts (para. 341).

2. Regional/subregional level

34. In its paragraphs 301-305, 351 and 352, the Platform for Action recommends actions to be taken at the regional and subregional levels. The regional commissions of the United Nations and other subregional/regional structures are called upon to promote and assist national institutions in monitoring and implementing the global Platform for Action within their mandates. This should be done, according to paragraph 301, "in coordination with the implementation of the respective regional platforms or plans of action and in close collaboration with the Commission on the Status of Women, taking into account the need for a coordinated follow-up to United Nations conferences in the economic, social, human rights and related fields".

35. In order to facilitate regional implementation, monitoring and evaluation, as called for in paragraph 302, the Economic and Social Council should "consider reviewing the institutional capacity of the United Nations regional commissions within their mandates, including their women's focal points/units, to deal with gender issues in the light of the Platform for Action, as well as the regional platforms or plans of action. Consideration should be given, inter alia, and, where appropriate, to strengthening capacity in this respect". The Platform also calls for regular coordination by United Nations agencies and bodies at the regional level in relation to technical assistance and operational activities (para. 304).

36. The Secretary-General will make every effort to strengthen the gender dimension in all the activities of the regional commissions and to ensure that their capacities are fully utilized to follow up the Platform for Action, and to assist in the coordination of relevant activities by United Nations organizations, including the development of concerted action programmes in support of the objectives of the Conference at the regional level.

3. International level

37. In section C of chapter V the Platform for Action contains detailed recommendations on the responsibilities to be exercised by the United Nations intergovernmental machinery in respect of the follow-up to the Conference. It places special emphasis on its role in promoting the development of an enhanced framework for international cooperation for gender issues and the comprehensive implementation of the Platform, integrating the results of other global United Nations conferences.

38. With respect to the United Nations system, the Platform for Action calls for the integration of a gender perspective into all policies and programmes through mainstreaming actions and stresses that responsibility for ensuring implementation of the Platform must rest at the highest level. Accordingly, the Secretary-General will propose to the Administrative Committee on Coordination the establishment of an inter-agency task force on the empowerment and the advancement of women. This task force will be an integral part of the arrangements being established under the aegis of the Administrative Committee for the integrated and coordinated follow-up to United Nations conferences (see also paras. 53 and 89 below). In paragraph 336, the Platform recommends that each organization set out the specific actions it will undertake, including goals and targets to realign priorities and redirect resources to meet the global priorities identified in the Platform for Action, with clear delineation of responsibility and accountability. These new orientations should be reflected in the revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001. 4/ The Secretary-General will ensure that this task is given priority attention.

(a) General Assembly

39. In paragraph 312 the Platform for Action points out that the General Assembly "is the principal policy-making and appraisal organ on matters relating to the follow-up to the Conference, and as such should integrate gender issues throughout its work", recognizing that these issues cut across social, political and economic policy. The General Assembly is invited "to include the follow-up to the Conference as part of its continuing work on advancement of women" and to review its implementation in 1996, 1998 and 2000.

40. As part of the ongoing rationalization of the work of the General Assembly, care must be taken to ensure that the advancement of women remains a major focus, and that the gender dimension is fully integrated in the consideration of all issues before it, including those relating to peace and security.

(b) Economic and Social Council

41. According to paragraphs 313 to 316 of the Platform for Action, the Economic and Social Council should oversee system-wide coordination of implementation of the Platform and make recommendations in this regard. It should review the implementation of the Platform giving due consideration to reports of the Commission on the Status of Women.

42. The Platform recommends that the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women taking into account the need for effective coordination with other related commissions and Conference follow-up.

> "The Council should incorporate gender issues into its discussion of all policy questions, giving due consideration to recommendations prepared by the Commission. It should consider dedicating at least one high-level segment before the year 2000 to the advancement of women ... with active ... participation ... of the specialized agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund." (para. 313)

The Council is also requested to consider dedicating at least one coordination segment before the year 2000 to coordination of the advancement of women, based on the system-wide medium-term plan, 4/ and one operational activities segment to the coordination of development activities related to gender (paras. 314 and 315).

43. In paragraph 321 the Platform for Action calls upon other functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council to "take due account of the Platform for Action and ensure the integration of gender aspects in their respective work".

44. The recommendations on the Economic and Social Council in the Platform for Action should be seen in the light of efforts to coordinate the follow-up to recent global conferences, taking into consideration the importance of mainstreaming gender issues, on the one hand, and ensuring continuing attention to the specific measures required to ensure the advancement of women, on the other. At its substantive session of 1995 the Council decided that, each year, within the framework of its coordination segment, it would carry out a review of cross-cutting themes common to major international conferences and/or contribute to an overall review of the implementation of the programme of action of a given conference.

(c) Commission on the Status of Women

45. The Commission on the Status of Women has been assisting the Economic and Social Council on issues relating to the advancement of women since 1946. The Platform for Action makes recommendations on the role of the Commission in paragraphs 317 to 320. It calls for a review and strengthening of the Commission's mandate, taking into account, inter alia, the need for synergy with other functional commissions. It states that the Commission should have a central role, within the United Nations system, in monitoring the implementation of the Platform and in assisting the Council in coordination of reporting on

implementation. It notes the need for the allocation of sufficient resources in support of the Commission.

46. The Platform for Action calls upon the Commission, in developing its work programme for the period 1996-2000, to "review the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and consider how to integrate in its agenda the follow-up to the World Conference on Women. In this context, the Commission ... should consider how it could further develop its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities" (para. 320). The follow-up to the Conference is already included in the provisional agenda of the Commission for its fortieth session, in 1996.

47. The Secretary-General intends to put forward proposals to the Commission at its next session to assist the Commission in developing its work programme to follow up the Platform for Action, including with respect to monitoring implementation of the recommendations in the Platform at all levels, and in enhancing its role in the coordinated follow-up to the continuum of conferences, taking into consideration related intergovernmental and inter-agency follow-up processes.

(d) Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

48. The Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was established in 1981 to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. It is a treaty body devoted specifically to the rights of women. The Platform for Action underscores its important role in securing enjoyment by women of their human rights. In paragraph 324 the Platform states that the ability of the Committee to monitor implementation of the Convention should be strengthened "through the provision of human and financial resources within the regular budget of the United Nations, including expert legal assistance and ... sufficient meeting time for the Committee" in keeping with the decision made by the meeting of the States parties in May 1995. It also calls for the Committee to "increase its coordination with other human rights treaty bodies, taking into account the recommendations of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action". 5/

49. The Secretary-General will make every effort to provide coordinated secretariat support to the Committee, bearing in mind that the promotion of the enjoyment by women of their human rights is central to the overall effort for the advancement of the status of women. The Committee is expected to consider the implications for its work of the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women at its fifteenth session, in January 1996.

(e) Role of the Secretary-General

50. The Secretary-General is strongly committed to assuming "responsibility for coordination of policy within the United Nations for the implementation of the Platform for Action and for the mainstreaming of a system-wide gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations", as requested in paragraph 326 of the Platform for Action.

51. In his statement to the closing session of the Conference, the Secretary-General indicated that he would ensure that the recommendations addressed to him were implemented swiftly and effectively, and that he was committed to integrating the gender perspective into all aspects of the work of the Organization. He added that he would work with his colleagues, the executive heads of the United Nations specialized agencies and the United Nations programmes and funds to ensure a coordinated system-wide response, integrating the follow-up of this Conference with that of other global conferences.

52. The Secretary-General welcomes the emphasis on policy coordination and mainstreaming in paragraph 326. These requirements were a major consideration in the restructuring of the economic and social sectors and, in particular, in the location of the Division for the Advancement of Women in the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. In the same context, the Secretary-General requested the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to assist him in ensuring policy coherence and coordination of operational activities. These requirements will continue to guide the Secretary-General in integrating the gender dimension in the programme management and human resource development strategies of the Organization and in ensuring a coordinated follow-up within the United Nations to recent global conferences, all of which have addressed the advancement of women as a central issue.

53. In relation to the system as a whole, at the initiative of the Secretary-General, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, at its first session for 1995, adopted a comprehensive statement reaffirming the strong commitment of executive heads to ensuring that the advancement of women is a policy priority within the organizations of the common system and to taking the necessary action to improve the status of women in their respective secretariats. At its most recent session, on 12 and 13 October 1995, the Administrative Committee on Coordination agreed that the gender perspective must be fully integrated into the work of the inter-agency task forces, under lead agency arrangements, which will follow up recent global conferences on the basis of cross-sectoral themes (see para. 89 below). As the Platform for Action encompasses but goes well beyond these themes, the Administrative Committee also decided to consider, following the current session of the General Assembly, the best means of promoting sustained and coordinated follow-up to the Platform, and of ensuring that the improvement of the status of women in all its aspects is placed in the mainstream of the work of the system.

54. The Secretary-General has given careful consideration in this context to the invitation "to establish a high-level post in the Office of the Secretary-General, using existing human and financial resources, to act as [his] adviser on gender issues and to help ensure system-wide implementation of the Platform for Action in close cooperation with the Division for the Advancement of Women" (para. 326).

55. The Secretary-General is strongly of the view that, for effective mainstreaming, all organizational entities must exercise their line responsibilities for implementing relevant recommendations in the Platform for Action, without duplication. In this light, and in view of ongoing efforts to

streamline high-level posts and to avoid additional managerial layers, the Secretary-General does not consider it appropriate to request an appropriation for an additional high-level post and related requirements at the present time.

56. Using existing human and financial resources, the Secretary-General would propose to integrate the functions referred to in paragraph 54 above into the portfolio of one of his Senior Advisers in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The Senior Adviser to the Secretary-General would not have line responsibilities or duplicate the work of units working on issues relating to the advancement of women. Rather, the Senior Adviser would have a role of overview and coordination, assisting the Secretary-General to ensure that the gender perspective is integrated into overall policy-making and programming, including in the political area, and is taken into account in all aspects of the work of the system and in furthering the Organization's linkages with civil society. The Secretary-General will propose that his Senior Adviser chair, in this capacity, the Administrative Committee on Coordination task force referred to in paragraph 89 below. Within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General, this senior official would also ensure that all statements and reports emanating from the Secretary-General are gender-sensitive. The Senior Adviser would also serve as a spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the above matters.

57. The Senior Adviser would draw upon the expertise and assistance of all existing entities working in this area, including the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, as well as UNIFEM, INSTRAW, the Focal Point on Women in the Department of Administration and Management and other concerned units within United Nations departments, funds and programmes.

58. As part of the effort to broaden participation and strengthen accountability, as well as to integrate effectively the gender dimension in the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General is requesting all United Nations departments and offices to review their programmes to determine how they can contribute to the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference. The Secretary-General will also ensure that the gender dimension is fully integrated in the perspective of the next medium-term plan, for the period 1998-2001.

59. Likewise, with respect to the status of women within the United Nations itself, the Secretary-General will pursue his efforts to integrate the measures in his strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) (see A/49/587 and Corr.1) within his overall human resources management strategy for the Organization as a whole. He intends to hold all programme managers accountable for implementation.

60. The participatory and inclusive character of the preparatory process and of the Conference itself was a key element in its success. The Secretary-General believes it essential that the follow-up to the Conference should also be as broadly based as possible. In particular, he considers it important that the expectations and concerns of major constituencies and groups on gender-related issues should be fully taken into account in implementing the Platform for Action, within the United Nations as well as the system as a whole.

61. To that end, the Secretary-General proposes to establish a high-level board on the advancement of women to advise him on the follow-up to the Conference. The board, which would consist of 15 to 20 eminent persons representing a broad range of experience and disciplines, would contribute to the building and strengthening of partnerships between the United Nations and major constituencies on gender-related issues; assist the Secretary-General and his Senior Adviser in promoting knowledge and understanding of, and mobilizing support for, United Nations activities for the advancement of women in general and the follow-up to the Conference in particular; and bring to the attention of the Secretary-General and, through him, to concerned intergovernmental and inter-agency bodies, emerging issues related to the implementation of the Platform for Action, and ways and means of addressing them. The Secretary-General trusts that the Board will be a source of innovative ideas and approaches in the follow-up to the Conference, and a source of strong support to the Organization in its efforts to improve the status of women.

(f) United Nations Secretariat

(i) Division for the Advancement of Women

62. The Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development is the principal unit within the United Nations Secretariat dealing with issues relating to the improvement of the status of women. The placement of the Division within the Department by the Secretary-General during the restructuring of the economic and social sectors was aimed at ensuring the integration of gender issues in policy formulation and coordination, including the servicing of the intergovernmental machinery. Effective substantive support of the intergovernmental machinery, especially the Commission on the Status of Women, will require the involvement and cooperation of all organizations of the United Nations system, including in particular UNIFEM and INSTRAW.

63. In paragraphs 327 and 328 the Platform for Action notes that:

> "The primary function of the Division for the Advancement of Women of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development is to provide substantive servicing to the Commission on the Status of Women and other intergovernmental bodies when they are concerned with the advancement of women, as well as to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. It has been designated focal point for the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies."

The Platform states (para. 328):

> "The Division should examine the obstacles to the advancement of women through the application of gender-impact analysis in policy studies for the Commission on the Status of Women and through support to other subsidiary bodies. After the Fourth World Conference on Women it should play a coordinating role in preparing the revision of the system-wide medium-term plan ... 1996-2001 and should continue serving as the secretariat for inter-agency coordination for the advancement of women. It should continue to maintain a flow of information with national commissions, national

institutions for the advancement of women and non-governmental organizations with regard to the implementation of the Platform for Action."

The Platform requests the Secretary-General "to ensure more effective functioning of the Division by, inter alia, providing sufficient human and financial resources within the regular budget of the United Nations" (para. 327).

64. As indicated above, the Division for the Advancement of Women will have a key role to play with respect to the implementation of the recommendations of the Conference, in support of the work of the intergovernmental machinery, of the organizations of the United Nations system and of other actors in the implementation of the Platform for Action and in promoting the integration of a gender perspective in all policies and programmes. There are, in particular, three areas in which the reinforcement of the Division is called for in order to enable it to carry out its new and expanded functions, in collaboration with other parts of the Secretariat and system, namely, capacity for gender analysis; the advancement of human rights of women; and the promotion of a system-wide approach to the implementation of the Platform, including outreach activities.

65. Gender-impact analysis of United Nations policies and programmes - a major prerequisite for mainstreaming - requires review of, interaction with and input into, a wide range of activities in all areas covered by the Organization. Pursuant to paragraph 328 of the Platform for Action and to respond to follow-up action by the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, the Division will, in particular, need to enhance its capacity to conduct and coordinate studies, applying gender impact analysis, to examine relationships between the advancement of women and other global issues dealt with by the United Nations and ways and means of promoting consistency and coherence in mainstreaming the gender dimension throughout the Organization. In addition to policy studies for the Commission on the Status of Women, outputs will include recommendations to the Secretary-General, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and, as appropriate, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

66. The role of the Division for the Advancement of Women in ensuring that the overall regime of protection of the human rights of women is strengthened is stressed in both the Platform for Action and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. 5/ This implies a broader role in providing gender-based information to various human rights treaty bodies, as well as in taking steps "to ensure that the human rights activities of the United Nations regularly address violations of women's human rights, including gender-specific abuses". 6/ In view of the importance accorded to the elimination of violence against women by the Platform for Action and previous intergovernmental decisions - including, inter alia, resolution 39/5 of the Commission on the Status of Women - the Division, together with other relevant United Nations bodies, will be called upon to provide enhanced support to the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and to assist in monitoring implementation of the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women (see General Assembly resolution 48/104). In this regard, the Division will need to develop its database on the subject. In addition, the Division will be required to

support the Commission on the Status of Women in relation to the communications procedure (Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/11) and in pursuing the proposal in the Platform for Action to elaborate a draft optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women on the right to petition.

67. A third area relates to inter-agency coordination and the monitoring of intergovernmental decisions concerning the implementation of the Platform for Action, in support of the coordinating and monitoring roles of the Commission on the Status of Women and the Economic and Social Council, and to accompanying outreach activities with entities outside the system. A decentralized model of implementation places a high premium on monitoring as a means of maintaining consistency and avoiding duplication of effort at all levels. Given the scope and diversity of the Platform for Action, the Division will need, in the exercise of its functions, to interact with a wider range and larger number of institutions and actors than in the past. It will play a central role in developing further the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women, 4/ which will need to reflect new methodologies and concepts.

68. The number of non-governmental organizations involved in the Conference and in the parallel NGO Forum was unprecedented. The process of mobilizing this vast and diverse support for the advancement of women will require considerable expansion of the Division's outreach capacity, including through publications, increased use of new information technologies, support for dissemination of information through mass media and women's networks, advisory services and database and network linkages.

69. The programme activities and the related resource requirements resulting from the new orientations and additional responsibilities outlined above were not included in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, 7/ before the General Assembly at the present session, which specifically provides for revision on the basis of the outcome of the Conference. A separate statement will be submitted in this regard.

(ii) Other units of the United Nations Secretariat referred to in the Platform for Action

70. The Platform for Action recommends (para. 331) that the Office of Human Resources Management:

> "... continue to accord priority to the recruitment and promotion of women in posts subject to geographical distribution, particularly in senior policy-level and decision-making posts, in order to achieve the goals set out in General Assembly resolutions 45/125 and 45/239 C and reaffirmed in General Assembly resolutions 46/100, 47/93, 48/106 and 49/167. The training service should design and conduct regular gender-sensitivity training or include gender-sensitivity training in all of its activities."

71. The General Assembly has before it at its present session a separate report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (A/50/691), which addresses the requirements referred to above, including plans to reach the target of 50 per cent women by the year 2000 and

developments in the area of training. Gender-equality issues will also be addressed in the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 in the context of the Secretary-General's overall strategy for human resource management, approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 49/222 B of 20 July 1995. Implementation of the strategic plan of action for the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (1995-2000) (see A/49/587 and Corr.1) will be monitored closely.

72. The Platform for Action further states

> "The Department of Public Information should seek to integrate a gender perspective in its general information activities and, within existing resources, strengthen and improve its programmes on women and the girl child. To this end, the Department should formulate a multimedia communications strategy to support the implementation of the Platform for Action, taking new technology fully into account. Regular outputs of the Department should promote the goals of the Platform, particularly in developing countries." (para. 332)

73. In formulating such a communications strategy, the Department of Public Information will build on the momentum generated in the media by its information activities in support of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and integrate this strategy within the overall information programme to follow up the current cycle of major United Nations development conferences. Utilizing the full array of promotional activities and multimedia products undertaken by the Department, the communications strategy will draw on the Department's network of information centres and services located in 67 countries and the inter-agency coordination mechanism, the Joint United Nations Information Committee.

74. With respect to the Statistical Division of the Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, in paragraph 333 the Platform for Action recommends that the Statistical Division should have an important coordinating role in international work in statistics, as described in chapter IV, strategic objective H.3.

75. In the period 1996-2001, implementation of the interrelated mandates of the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo from 5 to 13 September 1994, the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, and the Fourth World Conference on Women will require the development and dissemination of indicators on women and men with respect to the informal sector, unremunerated work, poverty, youth, elderly and disabled persons (para. 206 (e)-(h) and (k) and para. 208 (b)). It will also require the compilation and dissemination of the database and methodologies underlying these indicators, as well as the provision of technical support for work at the national level in these fields (para. 206 (b)). Statistical concepts and methods will need to be developed to measure and value unremunerated work. This would involve developing an international classification of activities for time-use statistics that is sensitive to the differences between women and men in remunerated and unremunerated work (para. 206 (g)), and working on the analytical framework and policy uses of supplementary accounts to the 1993 System of National Accounts that recognize the economic contribution of women. In this regard, the Statistical Division will interact with the inter-agency task force referred to above (para. 38), as well as with the Administrative

Committee on Coordination task force on basic social services for all (see para. 89 below), which will address, inter alia, database issues emerging from the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, as well as the Fourth World Conference on Women.

(g) United Nations Development Fund for Women

76. As indicated in the Platform for Action:

> "UNIFEM has the mandate to increase options and opportunities for women's economic and social development in developing countries by providing technical and financial assistance to incorporate the women's dimension into development at all levels. Therefore, UNIFEM should review and strengthen, as appropriate, its work programme in the light of the Platform for Action, focusing on women's political and economic empowerment. Its advocacy role should concentrate on fostering a multilateral policy dialogue on women's empowerment. Adequate resources for carrying out its functions should be made available." (para. 335)

77. The operational role of UNIFEM in the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women will be consolidated. It will continue to focus its work at the country level within the context of the resident coordinator system. UNIFEM will also work to bring its experience in programme countries to the attention of other organizations in the United Nations system with a view to strengthening the gender perspective of development programmes and increasing synergy with other United Nations organizations. UNIFEM will concentrate, as specified in the Platform for Action, on women's economic and political empowerment. With respect to women's economic empowerment, UNIFEM will concentrate on globalization and economic restructuring with a focus on trade and structural adjustment policies, gender-sensitive development policy and the promotion of sustainable livelihoods, including thorough new approaches to both micro-enterprise development and natural resource management. Its work with respect to political empowerment will focus on strengthening the role of women in governance, women's human rights, conflict prevention and peace-building, and empowering women to participate effectively in the global conference processes and the implementation of conference outcomes.

78. UNIFEM will support women's organizations to increase leadership opportunities for decision-making and advocacy for women. UNIFEM will play a key role in supporting the implementation of the Platform for Action at the country level, including through the proposed inter-agency task force, and the resident coordinator system.

(h) International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women

79. The Platform for Action states:

> "INSTRAW has a mandate to promote research and training on women's situation and development. In the light of the Platform for Action, INSTRAW should review its work programme and develop a programme for implementing those aspects of the Platform for Action that fall within its mandate. It should identify those types of research and research

methodologies to be given priority, strengthen national capacities to carry out women's studies and gender research, including that on the status of the girl child, and develop networks of research institutions that can be mobilized for that purpose. It should also identify those types of education and training that can be effectively supported and promoted by the Institute." (para. 334)

80. Research and training activities to further the advancement of women requiring priority attention in the light of the Fourth World Conference on Women and other global United Nations conferences will include the study and understanding of the obstacles to the full recognition of women's participation in sustainable development, including methodological/conceptual development; concrete research and training programmes focusing on ways and means to solve the extreme poverty affecting women world wide, in particular in developing countries; and the dissemination of research findings and analytical tools to assist the efforts of intergovernmental agencies, governmental officials and policy makers, as well as academic and research centres and non-governmental organizations. Sections A and E to L in chapter IV of the Platform for Action are of particular relevance to the work of the Institute.

(i) Other organizations of the United Nations system

81. In paragraphs 336 to 344 of the Platform for Action, the specialized agencies and organizations of the United Nations are called upon to strengthen their support for actions at the national level and to enhance their contributions to coordinated follow-up by the United Nations.

"... each organization should set out the specific actions they will undertake, including goals and targets to realign priorities and redirect resources to meet the global priorities identified in the Platform for Action. There should be a clear delineation of responsibility and accountability. These proposals should in turn be reflected in the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001." (para. 336)

The Platform for Action additionally calls for gender mainstreaming and gender focal points in each agency.

82. The Platform for Action also recommends that "the Administrative Committee on Coordination consider how its participating entities might best coordinate their activities, inter alia, through existing procedures at the inter-agency level for ensuring system-wide coordination to implement and help follow up objectives of the Platform for Action" (para. 316).

83. Each organization should "take steps to enhance and support the roles and responsibilities of its focal points on women issues" (para. 337); "cooperate more [when providing technical assistance] to ensure the continuing promotion of the advancement of women" (para. 338); "provide appropriate technical assistance and other forms of assistance to the countries with economies in transition in order to facilitate solution of their specific problems regarding the advancement of women" (para. 339); and "accord greater priority to the recruitment and promotion of women at the Professional level to achieve gender

balance, particularly at decision-making levels ... Due regard should be paid to the importance of recruiting the staff on as wide a geographical basis as possible. Organizations should report regularly to their governing bodies on progress towards this goal" (para. 340). The Platform for Action proposes that "coordination of United Nations operational activities for development at the country level should be improved through the resident coordinator system in accordance with relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, in particular General Assembly resolution 47/199, to take full account of the Platform" (para. 34_).

84. Paragraphs 342 to 344 of the Platform for Action encourage international financial institutions, in implementing the Platform:

> "To review and revise policies, procedures and staffing to ensure that investments and programmes benefit women and thus contribute to sustainable development. They are also encouraged to increase the number of women in high-level positions, increase staff training in gender analysis and institute policies and guidelines to ensure full consideration of the differential impact of lending programmes and other activities on women and men. In this regard, the Bretton Woods institutions, the United Nations, as well as its funds and programmes and the specialized agencies, should establish regular and substantive dialogue, including dialogue at the field level, for more efficient and effective coordination of their assistance in order to strengthen the effectiveness of their programmes for the benefit of women and their families." (para. 342)

85. Moreover, in paragraph 354, the Platform for Action proposes that the international financial institutions and regional development banks "should be invited to examine their grants and lending and to allocate loans and grants to programmes for implementing the Platform for Action in developing countries, especially in Africa and the least developed countries". The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank along with the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system are invited to assist countries with economies in transition to design and implement policies and programmes for the advancement of women" (para. 356).

86. The Platform for Action recommends that consideration should be given "to inviting the World Trade Organization to consider how it might contribute to the implementation of the Platform for Action, including activities in cooperation with the United Nations system" (para. 343).

87. These recommendations will be brought to the attention of all concerned organizations, and their responses will be covered in subsequent reports. The concerned organizations, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, will be invited to participate in the proposed inter-agency task force (see para. 38 above).

88. The revised system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 1996-2001, which will reflect the proposals for action agreed to in Beijing and at other recent global conferences, will provide a basis for monitoring the implementation by the United Nations system of the Platform for Action and related recommendations on gender issues formulated by other

conferences. It will provide a mechanism for mobilizing and monitoring joint activities and for identifying gaps in the implementation of the Platform. The plan is scheduled for review by the Commission on the Status of Women, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, the Committee for Programme and Coordination and the Economic and Social Council in 1996.

89. At the second regular session for 1995 of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, held on 12 and 13 October, executive heads agreed that monitoring the follow-up by the United Nations system to the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Social Summit for Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women will be a main concern of the Committee in the period ahead. The Administrative Committee on Coordination decided that it will, to the extent possible, undertake this work on the basis of cross-sectoral themes, bringing together related results of recent global conferences. The Committee also decided to strengthen coordinated support for follow-up action at the country level, through inter-agency task forces organized around three interrelated themes: (a) the enabling environment for social and economic development; (b) employment and sustainable livelihoods; and (c) basic social services for all. It directed that the gender dimension should be taken fully into account in the work of each of these task forces. Noting that the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women encompasses but goes well beyond these themes, the Secretary-General, following action by the General Assembly, will propose to the Administrative Committee on Coordination the establishment of a goal-oriented, inter-agency task force on the empowerment and advancement of women in order to promote sustained and coordinated follow-up to the Platform for Action and to ensure that the improvement of the status of women in all its aspects is placed in the mainstream of the work of the system. The experience of the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Group on Women, a network of focal points on women's issues that has been meeting within the framework of the Administrative Committee on Coordination since International Women's Year, in 1975, will be drawn upon in this regard.

(j) Non-governmental organizations

90. As noted above, the Conference was characterized by the unprecedented involvement of civil society, including the participation of an unprecedented number of non-governmental organizations. In recognition of this contribution, the Platform for Action states that the active support and participation of a broad and diverse range of institutional actors should be encouraged, including "legislative bodies, academic and research institutions, professional associations, trade unions, cooperatives, local community groups, non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations and feminist groups, the media, religious groups, youth organizations and cultural groups, as well as financial and non-profit organizations" (para. 295).

91. The Platform for Action provides for a role for non-governmental organizations in the design and implementation of national strategies or plans of action (para. 297). It further states that non-governmental organizations should be encouraged "to develop their own programmes to complement government efforts. Women's organizations and feminist groups, in collaboration with other non-governmental organizations, should be encouraged to organize networks, as necessary, and to advocate for and support the implementation of the Platform

for Action by Governments and regional and international bodies" (para. 298). The Platform calls for strengthening the capacity of non-governmental organizations to mobilize and contribute resources towards implementation of the Platform (para. 350). Underscoring the role that non-governmental organizations have in implementing the Platform for Action, the Platform calls for consideration to be given to "establishing a mechanism for collaborating with non-governmental organizations to promote the implementation of the Platform at various levels" (para. 344).

92. The Secretary-General attaches great importance to the continued mobilization of all elements of civil society in promoting an effective follow-up to the Conference and expects that the Commission on the Status of Women will give consideration to means of promoting the effective implementation of the provisions of the Platform for Action relating to non-governmental organizations, including the establishment of appropriate mechanisms to enhance collaboration with these organizations.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FIFTIETH SESSION

93. Consideration by the General Assembly of the report on the Fourth World Conference on Women should serve to consolidate the commitments entered into by Member States and the international community in Beijing. To that end, the Assembly at its current session may wish to consider taking the following action:

(a) Calling upon Member States and the international community to commit themselves to full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action through the early development of specific implementation strategies, including the establishment or improvement of national machineries for the advancement of women and measures to integrate the gender dimension into all policies and programmes;

(b) Calling upon the organizations of the United Nations system to extend their full support to Governments and the international community in the implementation of the Platform for Action in the context of an integrated follow-up to all recent global conferences;

(c) Inviting all elements of civil society to contribute actively to the fulfilment of the objectives of the Platform for Action;

(d) Deciding to review the implementation of the Platform for Action on a biennial basis;

(e) Inviting the Economic and Social Council to utilize its high-level, coordination and operational activities segments to further policy coordination and inter-agency cooperation towards the achievement of the objectives of the Platform for Action, in accordance with the recommendations of the Conference;

(f) Inviting the Economic and Social Council to review and strengthen the mandate of the Commission on the Status of Women, taking into account the need

for effective coordination with other related commissions and Conference follow-up, so as to enable the Commission to play a central role, within the United Nations system, in monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action, and in assisting the Council in coordination of reporting on implementation;

(g) Inviting the Commission on the Status of Women, in developing its work programme for the period 1996-2000, to consider modalities for maximizing its contribution to the follow-up to the Conference, including monitoring of implementation, policy development with respect to the critical areas of concern in the Platform for Action and the strengthening of its catalytic role in mainstreaming a gender perspective in United Nations activities;

(h) Also inviting, within their mandates, all other United Nations organs and their subsidiary bodies to take due account of the Platform for Action and to ensure the integration of the gender dimension in their respective policy-making activities;

(i) Calling for mobilization of resources from all sources to further the implementation of the Platform for Action, including sustained contributions to voluntarily funded programmes of the United Nations system for activities on gender and development;

(j) Noting the commitment of the Secretary-General to exercise responsibility for coordination of policy within the United Nations for the implementation of the Platform for Action and for the mainstreaming of a system-wide gender perspective in all activities of the United Nations at all levels, and the arrangements being made by the Secretary-General in this regard;

(k) Noting the intention of the Secretary-General to establish a high-level advisory board on the advancement of women to ensure that the expectations and concerns of major constituencies on gender-related issues are fully taken into account in implementing the Platform for Action;

(l) Noting the key roles to be played by the Administrative Committee on Coordination, through, inter alia, the proposed inter-agency task force, the regional commissions and the resident coordinator system, in contributing to the coordinated implementation of the Platform for Action at the inter-agency, regional and national levels;

(m) Providing for the strengthening of the capacity of relevant entities within the United Nations to contribute, in a coordinated manner, to the effective follow-up to the Conference.

Notes

1/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20).

2/ Report of the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace, Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.85.IV.10), chap. I, sect. A.

3/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women ..., chap. I, resolution 1, annexes I and II respectively.

4/ Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1993, Supplement No. 9 (E/1993/29).

5/ Report of the World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna, 14-25 June 1993 (A/CONF.157/24 (Part I)), chap. III.

6/ Ibid., para. 42.

7/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Fiftieth Session, Supplement No. 6 (A/50/6/Rev.1).